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ABSTRACT

A study determined what comprehension strategies either contributed to literary engagement or inhibited engagement among adolescents. Subjects, 25 eleventh-grade students chosen at random from two heterogenous English classes in a suburban school, read two short stories and reported their thinking and understanding as they were reading. Transcripts of the think-aloud protocols were analyzed. Results indicated that: (1) 7 of the readers were engaged on both stories, 7 were not engaged on either, and the remaining 11 were engaged with one story but not the other; (2) difficulty of the story had a strong effect on engagement; (3) subjects' self-ratings of their usual story engagement, their measured engagement, and their teachers' ratings did not correspond very well; (4) both engaged and nonengaged readers tended to use the same strategies; and (5) there was a wide variability of strategy use among readers. Findings suggest that teachers need to provide strategy instruction for all students with the suggestion that students need to experiment and discover which strategies work best for them. (A figure of reading survey questions and 5 tables of data are included; 29 references are attached.) (RS)

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COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES OF LITERARY ENGAGEMENT:

A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT READERS

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COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES OF LITERARY ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY OF ADOLESCENT READERS

This study is an exploration of strategy use among adolescents who become engaged with short stories and adolescents who do not make that engagement. The purposes of this study are to determine what comprehension strategies seem either to contribute to engagement or to inhibit engagement among these students. In addition, other possible contributing factors, such as student, parental and peer interest in reading, are examined.

Although English teachers and researchers have always been concerned about students' understanding of literature, within the past decade there has been renewed effort to understand the reasoning and strategic processing that accompanies constructing meaning from text. Most theorists and researchers now view the reading process as "transactional" in nature (Beach & Hynds, 1991). Within the transactional theory the reader is not seen as a separate entity, acting upon the text, nor the text as acting upon the reader, but both as parts or aspects of a total event (Rosenblatt, 1985). The reader both changes and is changed by the meaning created from the text.

Many earlier studies of literary responses focused on the content of individual reader's responses to various genre (Applebee, 1978). Readers' ability to interpret stories and to respond personally to them were explored. Purves (1973) found that girls were more likely to express involvement in a story than boys. Purves also noted that older students tend to give more interpretive responses than younger students, a finding corroborated by Bunbury (1985).

Recent research has often focused on the reader's stance or orientation to the text. Rosenblatt (1978) classified the reading act as falling somewhere on a continuum between predominantly efferent reading (seeking to obtain knowledge) to predominantly aesthetic (reading for appreciation and the literary experience). There appears to be a strong correlation between aesthetic stance and higher levels of personal understanding (Cox & Many, 1989; Many, 1990, 1991).

Vipond and Hunt (1984), in exploring readers' orientation to texts, identified three possible stances: information-driven (similar to Rosenblatt's efferent reading), story-driven (similar to aesthetic reading) or point-driven, attempting to infer the author's theme. They found that most readers exhibited information-driven or story-driven orientations.

Langer (1990) identified four recursive stances that readers take in relation to the text: being out and stepping into an envisionment, being in and moving through an envisionment, stepping back and rethinking what one knows, and stepping out and objectifying the experience. Langer found that all subjects in her study, average, above- and below-average, exhibited all four stances. Purcell-Gates (1991) used Langer's categories to look at remedial readers' attempts to read short stories. She found that the remedial readers spent a disproportionate amount of time being out of an envisionment and attempting to step into one.

Garrison and Hynds (1991) examined proficient and less proficient readers' use of personal evocations and reflections while reading four short stories. They found that proficient readers used personal experience to help them understand the text whereas less proficient readers appeared to use their prior experiences to draw away from the text. Different readers may react to literary text in idiosyncratic ways (Golden & Guthrie, 1986; Lehr, 1988); however, Purves (1985) suggests that a

study of the patterns of response will yield valuable insights into text factors and reader factors that influence reader response.

Paralleling this research into readers' responses to literature has been an interest in comprehension strategy use (Baker & Brown, 1984a; Paris, Lipson & Wixson, 1983). Many studies have suggested that good readers have greater knowledge and/or control of comprehension strategies than do poor readers (Gambrell & Heathington, 1981; Hare & Pulliam, 1980; Kletzien, 1991; Olshavsky, 1976-77; Zabrucky & Ratner, 1989). Particular strategies that seem to contribute to greater comprehension have been identified and taught to students with positive results (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980; Palincsar & Brown, 1985; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, & Kurita, 1989). Beach and Appleman (1984) suggest that readers may use different strategies for expository and literary text types; however, strategy researchers have used both types of text for their studies, and clear differences have not been reported.

This study is based on both the reader response research and the comprehension strategy use research. It seems plausible to assume that readers who differ in their engagement with a story may use different strategies in constructing meaning. In this study, an attempt is made to distinguish patterns of strategies used by the readers who are able to "move through an envisionment" (engaged readers) to those used by the readers who "spend a disproportionate amount of time being out of an envisionment" (nonengaged readers).

Method

Subjects

Twenty-five eleventh grade students, chosen at random from two heterogeneous eleventh grade English classes in a suburban school, participated in this study. Subjects' mean age was 17 years 1 month (range: 16 years 6 months to 17 years 10 months). There were 15 girls and 10 boys. None of the subjects had been identified as learning disabled and none had repeated a grade.

Materials

Two quite different short stories were used for this study. They have both been read successfully by eleventh grade students in the past although no subject in this study had read either story before. Both stories were short enough that a think-aloud procedure would take approximately thirty minutes. The stories were both written with a relatively low vocabulary level so that decoding was not difficult for any of the subjects. This was important because if subjects have to spend an inordinate amount of time on lower-level reading tasks such as decoding, they may not use the comprehension strategies that they may know (Kletzien, 1991).

"Mr. Lupescu," the more difficult of the two stories, has suspense and a plot with a surprise at the end, requiring students to follow events rather carefully. This story measured sixth grade level using the Fry readability graph. The other story, "After You, My Dear Alphonse," represents a different type of short story. Unlike "Mr. Lupescu," its plot is secondary to its theme, thus likely eliciting a different type response from the reader. It measured third grade level on the Fry graph; however the content of the story reflects mature concepts appropriate for older readers.

Each story was xeroxed and had red dots inserted at intervals; these dots were reminders to the subjects that they should stop and report their thinking and understanding as they were reading.

Procedures

Subjects were seen individually by one of the researchers. They were told that the purpose of the study was to examine how high school readers read and understand short stories. They were then told that they would read a short story and that interspersed in the story would be red dots. At each red dot they were to stop reading and report what they were thinking and how they were trying to understand the story. Subjects were given instructions to report anything that they were thinking while they were reading. If their responses were not clear, the researcher asked noncuing questions for further explanations.

Subjects read one short story at the first meeting and then read a second one at a subsequent meeting. These sessions were approximately two to three weeks apart. Instructions were repeated for the second session. All of the responses from both sessions were audiotape-recorded and then transcribed word for word.

These transcripts were first analyzed to determine whether the students were successful in engaging with the stories. Each transcript was divided into thought units and each of these thought units was coded according to Langer's (1990) classification scheme. Each thought unit was studied to determine whether it represented a subject's 1) being out of and attempting to step into an envisionment, 2) being in and moving through an envisionment, 3) stepping back and rethinking what one knows, or 4) stepping out and objectifying the experience.

Subjects for whom at least 50% percent of the thought units were coded as being in and moving through an envisionment were considered "engaged" readers. Subjects who had fewer than 50% thought units coded as being in and moving through an envisionment were considered "nonengaged" with the story.

In addition to the engagement analysis, subjects' comprehension of the stories was considered. The transcripts provided substantial information about the extent of the subjects' developing understanding of the stories. Comprehension was coded as good, fair, or poor.

Transcripts were further analyzed to determine what strategies the subjects were using. This analysis was based on Kletzien's (1991) comprehension strategy classification scheme but modified by examining transcripts for strategies that had not been included in the scheme. The original classification was developed by examining subjects' responses to a cloze activity using expository text. Some of the strategies used by subjects in the previous studies were not used in this study, and some other strategies were added. The classification scheme is described in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Differences between engaged and nonengaged readers in total strategy use for each of the stories was determined, and differences between types of strategies used by each group of readers for each of the stories was examined.

Subjects were also given a survey to determine their attitudes and experience with reading fiction (Figure 1). The survey included items asking how much fiction they read, their favorite type of fiction, whether their families read and discuss books, whether their peers read and discuss books, and whether they think that they usually engage with literature. Open-ended questions

asking for students' reasoning about whether they become engaged with their reading were also asked. Responses to this survey were correlated with subjects' engagement with the stories and strategy use.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In addition to these measures, the subjects' teacher was asked her perception of whether these subjects were usually engaged with literature.

Results

Engagement

Initial analysis using Langer's stances indicated that of the twenty-five subjects, seven could be considered engaged when reading both of the short stories. Seven were not engaged on either short story. Three subjects were engaged with the Lupescu story but not the Alphonse story (for a total of 10 subjects engaged with Lupescu), and eight subjects were engaged with the Alphonse story and not the Lupescu story (for a total of 15 subjects engaged with Alphonse).

In general, the thought units of most subjects fell into either the being out of and trying to step into the envisionment stance (range: 16% to 76%, median 32%) or the being in and moving through the envisionment stance (range: 5% to 77%, median 51%). A smaller percentage of the units could be considered stepping out and objectifying the experience (range: 1% to 49%, median 12%), and an even smaller percentage was coded as stepping back and rethinking what one knows (range 0% to 6%, median 0%).

Self-reports of engagement were taken in two different modes. Subjects were asked verbally whether they usually "got into" stories that they were reading after they had responded to the think-alouds. In addition, each subject subsequently completed the survey which asked the same question. Of the seven subjects who were identified through the think-alouds as engaged while reading both short stories, all reported orally that they "got into" their reading; six repeated the assertion on the written survey whereas one replied "sometimes."

Of the seven subjects who were identified through the think-alouds as nonengaged with reading either of the short stories, two reported orally that they "got into" their reading; four reported that they sometimes did, and one said she never got into reading. On the written surveys, four described themselves as getting into their reading; two said they sometimes did, and one repeated that she never did.

Eleven of the subjects were engaged in one story and nonengaged in the other. When asked orally whether they "got into" their reading, four said they did; five said sometimes, and two said never. On the written surveys, seven indicated that they were engaged readers; three said sometimes, and only one repeated that she never did.

In addition to the self-reports, the subjects' teacher was interviewed for her impression of these students' engagement with literature. With the group of subjects engaged in both stories, there was some agreement with their self-reports. The teacher felt that four of these students were consistently engaged readers; two were sometimes engaged, and one was not engaged.

For the nonengaged group, the teacher's impression was that two of them were engaged readers; two were nonengaged readers, and three were sometimes engaged. For the mixed engagement group, the teacher reported five of the subjects as usually engaged readers, four as nonengaged, and one as sometimes engaged. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Insert Table 2 about here

Strategy use

Transcripts were examined for total strategy use and for types of strategies used. Nine different strategies were identified. These included rereading, reading subsequent text, questioning, predicting, using prior knowledge, visualizing, making inferences, relating to the story theme, and using literary conventions.

Because some readers were engaged while reading one of the short stories but not the other, and because it seemed as though the short stories might require different strategies to understand, it was not possible simply to compare engaged with nonengaged readers. Strategy use, therefore, was considered for four different conditions: 1) Engaged subjects reading Lupescu, 2) Nonengaged subjects reading Lupescu, 3) Engaged subjects reading Alphonse, and 4) Nonengaged subjects reading Alphonse. Means and standard deviations of total strategy use and of use of each strategy is reported in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

There was a significant main effect only for strategy. Making inferences was used significantly ($p<.001$) more often than any other strategy. Rereading and relating to story theme are the only strategies in which statistically significant differences were found between groups. The Engaged Lupescu readers used rereading more than the Engaged Alphonse ($p<.001$) and the Nonengaged Alphonse ($p<.02$) readers did. The Nonengaged Lupescu readers reread more than the Engaged Alphonse ($p<.01$) readers did. Engaged Alphonse readers used relating to the story theme more often than the Engaged Lupescu ($p<.03$) readers did.

Comprehension

It would seem reasonable to assume that readers who are more highly engaged with their reading would understand it better. Of the ten Engaged Lupescu readers, four had good comprehension and six had fair comprehension of the story. The fifteen Nonengaged Lupescu readers demonstrated a different comprehension pattern: four had fair comprehension, and eleven had poor comprehension. Of the fifteen Engaged Alphonse readers, nine had good comprehension, five fair comprehension, and one poor comprehension. Three of the ten Nonengaged Alphonse readers had good comprehension, five fair comprehension, and three poor comprehension. This information is summarized in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here.

Related factors

Other factors which might be related to engagement and interest in reading were addressed in the surveys. Subjects were asked whether they liked fiction, whether their parents liked to read, whether their peers liked to read, and whether they discussed reading with their parents or peers. Responses to these questions are reported according to engagement group: engaged on both stories, nonengaged on both stories, engaged on one story and not the other.

For the engaged group, all seven reported liking fiction. Four reported that their parents like to read and that they discussed books with their parents. Two reported that they didn't know whether their parents liked to read; one of these subjects said she discussed books with her parents, the other said he did not. One subject reported that his parents did not like to read and that he did not discuss books with them. Five of the subjects in this group said that their peers liked to read; four of these discussed books with their peers often, and one discussed them "sometimes." One subject indicated that she didn't know whether her peers like to read or not and that she did not discuss books with them. The other subject in this group stated that his peers liked to read sometimes and that they discussed books.

Six of the subjects in the nonengaged group indicated that they liked fiction; only one said that she "sometimes" liked to read. Six of the subjects reported that their parents liked to read, and one said that he didn't know. Only one subject, however, discussed books with her parents often; three said they sometimes talked about books, and three said they never discussed books with their parents. Four of this group stated that their peers liked to read; two said their peers didn't like to read, and one indicated that he didn't know. Five said they sometimes discussed books, and two said they never discussed books with their peers.

Ten subjects in the mixed engagement group expressed a liking for fiction. One stated that she didn't like to read at all. Ten of the subjects said that their parents liked to read; one said that they did not. Five subjects reported discussing books with their parents; five said they never discussed books with their parents, and one said that they sometimes discussed books. Eight subjects thought their peers liked to read; two thought that they didn't, and one didn't know. Five discuss books with peers; two never discuss reading with peers, and four sometimes discuss books with peers.

Subjects were also asked how many fiction books they had read within the last year. The mean number of books for the engaged group was 11.28; the range was from 2 to 36. The nonengaged group had a mean of 5.57 books, range: 3 to 12. The mean for the mixed engagement group was 14.18 with a range from 0 to 30. Because of the wide variation of books read within each group, there was not a significant difference between them. This information is summarized in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here.

Discussion

Engagement

Engagement is not an easy construct to measure. In this study Langer's stance of being out and trying to step into an envisionment was equated with nonengagement, and her stance of being in and moving through an envisionment was equated with engagement. For most of the subjects,

these two stances were fairly clear. Langer (1990) described the being out and stepping into the envisionment stance as focusing on gathering information, forming tentative questions and associations in an attempt to build a text world. Comments from a subject that were coded as being in this stance are as follows:

> Well, I'm not sure if this lady is the mother or the sister or what she is, but she is worried about him and she wants to have him see somebody, I think, but I don't know who. (Subject 4)

Another subject provided this example:

> Mr. Lupescu, no one has ever seen him. I guess Marjorie is a little kid or whatever, or Bobby, one of them are a little kid, and he always goes out to see this little fairy. (Subject 12)

In both examples, subjects are attempting to understand who the characters are; they are forming tentative hypotheses about the characters and their relationships.

Langer (1990) describes the second stance, being in and moving through an envisionment, as focusing on developing an interpretation, using local envisionments and personal knowledge to build and elaborate understandings, where readers have already gained initial understanding of the piece and are building an evolving envisionment. An example of a subject's comments reflecting this stance are as follows:

> Mr. Lupescu has got an imagination of his own, and he likes to tell stories, and that's why he doesn't like to talk to people or doesn't like what happens between human beings so that is why if Marjorie had come outside, he wouldn't have talked to her; he would have left. (Subject 8)

Another example of this stance (spoken with great indignation) is from Subject 23:

> I don't see how someone can be so rude. I really think that was rude. She should have realized that just because someone was Black doesn't mean that he's poor and they can't afford anything, but I like how he says "Why?" He's truthful and he's honest, and he just says we don't need it.

In both cases, subjects were responding directly to the actions of the characters in the stories and were interpreting these actions in the light of their own experiences or in the light of information located in other parts of the story.

For purposes of this study, these first two stances were the most important because engagement was based on the idea that if readers spent most of their time being in and moving through an envisionment, they were engaged with the story. Langer's last two stances, however, were also noted in the subjects' comments.

Stepping back and rethinking what one knows is described by Langer as focusing on reflecting on personal knowledge and using growing understandings to rethink previously held ideas, beliefs, or feelings. This stance was relatively rare among the subjects interviewed. Subject 12, for example, commented as follows: "He can't fly, and it says he doesn't have to be Irish. I didn't know that fairies were supposed to be Irish; maybe they usually are Irish, but he isn't."

Many subjects stepped out and objectified the experience, defined by Langer as focusing on taking a critical stance, distancing oneself from the text to examine, evaluate or analyze the reading experience or aspects of the text. It is possible that subjects used this stance because in the initial introduction they were told to report anything they did to understand the text. This may have led

them to focus on the reading act more than they normally would have. An example of this stance was from Subject 17:

> This is a confusing paragraph. I think at first they are just describing the kid Bobby. I am trying to figure out. Now it is starting to confuse me more because there is something here that I haven't figured out yet.

Another example of this stance is from Subject 20:

> Good ending! I liked the ending. It had everything kind of wrap itself up very fast and then it ended. I thought it was neat.

At the outset, it seemed possible that engaged readers would be engaged whichever story they were reading, and that nonengaged readers would be nonengaged with both stories. In actuality, this dichotomy was not realized. Seven of the readers were engaged on both stories, and seven were not engaged on either; however, the other eleven were engaged with one story and not the other.

Difficulty of the story appeared to have a strong effect on engagement. Of the two stories, "Mr. Lupescu" was more difficult to understand. Although the selection measured sixth grade level on the Fry readability graph, the plot itself was somewhat complicated. In addition, it shifted perspective part way through the story, and it had a surprise ending. Some of the subjects found it hard to understand, and this seemed to prevent them from becoming engaged with the reading. Evaluation of subjects' comprehension supports this impression: of the fifteen subjects who were nonengaged with Lupescu, eleven of them had poor comprehension and four had fair comprehension.

"After You, My Dear Alphonse," on the other hand, was very easy to read. It measured third grade level on the Fry readability graph, and the theme of the story was more important than the plot. Many of the subjects commented that it was easier to understand, although for some of them that did not mean that they were more engaged with it.

Subject 4 commented after having read both stories, "I really got into this one [Alphonse]. I guess I didn't feel like I got lost in it. I got lost and never really got into that other one [Lupescu].

On the other hand, Subject 3 agreed that Alphonse was easier to read but harder to understand:

> I liked Lupescu better. This one [Alphonse] was easy to read. Key things just stuck out. I didn't get into this one as much as the other one [Lupescu]. The other one toward the end you could just kind of pick up on what the meaning was, but this one, I guess it was kind of a hidden meaning or to make you think something was there but it really wasn't.

Subject 13 also had difficulty becoming engaged with Alphonse and stated, "I don't know what it was about. It didn't have any plot, but it was easy to read."

Comprehension of Alphonse appeared to be less related to engagement than comprehension of Lupescu. Of the ten readers who were nonengaged on Alphonse, two of them had good comprehension, five had fair comprehension and only three had poor comprehension. Of the fifteen who were engaged in Alphonse, nine had good comprehension, five had fair

comprehension, and one had poor comprehension. Therefore, it was possible to understand the story well, yet remain nonengaged.

One possible reason that some subjects may have had difficulty becoming engaged with Alphonse relates to the theme of the story. It is a story of a woman who stereotypes her son's friend simply because he is an African-American. It is possible that this is a difficult topic for some of the subjects, and they chose to distance themselves from the story. According to Beach and Hynds (1991), "readers may respond positively or negatively to texts, depending on the extent to which their attitudes toward interpersonal or social phenomena are reinforced or threatened" (p. 464).

Interestingly, most subjects' self ratings of their usual story engagement, their measured engagement in the experimental stories, and their teacher's ratings did not correspond very well. One possibility is that because a think-aloud procedure interrupts reading for reporting, it interferes with engagement in the story. Another possibility is that subjects were trying to please the researchers by giving responses that they perceived as socially acceptable.

The group that seemed best able to evaluate their own engagement was the group that was engaged on both stories. Their self-evaluations, both written and oral, and their actual reading behaviors were very close. The teacher's evaluation, however, did not correspond highly with these reports. It is possible that within a classroom, awareness of literary engagement is difficult for a teacher to determine.

Strategy use

The major purpose of this study was to identify strategies which seemed to contribute to engagement for these readers. Although a fairly wide variety of strategies was identified, it was not possible to discern a pattern of strategy use for engaged readers versus nonengaged readers. Both engaged and nonengaged readers tended to use the same strategies, and there was wide variability of strategy use among the readers. There also appeared to be a difference in strategy use depending on the story.

In order to analyze strategy use by engagement, it was necessary to divide the subjects into four groups: those engaged with the Lupescu story (10), those nonengaged with the Lupescu story (15), those engaged with the Alphonse story (15) and those nonengaged with the Alphonse story (10). Membership within these groups varied because seven subjects were engaged with both stories; seven subjects were engaged with neither story, and the others were engaged with one and not the other.

Differences in total strategy use were not significant although there was a trend for Nonengaged Alphonse readers to use fewer strategies than the other groups. This story was easy to read, and it is possible that some of the strategies that subjects used were not apparent to them because they didn't have to "work" to understand. Baker and Brown (1984b) have indicated that if comprehension is proceeding smoothly, there is less awareness of strategy use.

Engaged Alphonse readers tended make a lot of inferences and respond emotionally to the story, possibly accounting for the fact that even though the story was easy to read, these readers showed considerably more strategy use than the Nonengaged Alphonse readers.

Rereading was used more by the Engaged Lupescu readers than by both the Engaged and Nonengaged Alphonse readers. This probably reflects the difficulty of the text. The Lupescu story had a rather intricate plot with a surprise ending which caused subjects often to go back and try to piece together the parts of the story. Even the Nonengaged Lupescu readers reread more often than the Engaged Alphonse readers.

Engaged Alphonse readers used relating to the story theme more often than the Engaged Lupescu readers. Again, the most likely explanation for this is that the most important characteristic of the Alphonse story was the theme. Subjects who became engaged with it responded directly to that theme.

Although some of the other differences approached significance, it seems likely that a greater understanding of strategy use for engagement can best be developed by examining individual readers' responses. The variation between engaged readers was great, indicating that perhaps strategy use is somewhat idiosyncratic and individual.

For example, one reader who was engaged in both stories, whose comprehension was excellent, and who was highly rated for engagement by her teacher, used questioning through both stories. At the end of each section of text, she would ask herself a whole series of questions based on what she had read and then would start to read again. At the end of the Lupescu story, she went back over the questions that she had asked that she had not satisfied and looked for information to answer them. She responded very emotionally to the Alphonse story, exclaiming at great length how annoyed she was with the woman in the story. In trying to explain why she thinks she usually "gets into" stories, she wrote, "I feel like I'm in the story. Like I'm right beside the main character -- experiencing the things he/she is experiencing."

Another reader, engaged in both stories with excellent comprehension and highly ranked by her teacher, indicated that she used questioning as well. She stated directly, "I always, when I read, I never have my mind set until I keep reading and then find out, and then I put my mind ahead to another question. I always question myself when I read." She also used visualization through both stories. After almost each section of text, her response began with, "I picture...." In her written explanation of why she thinks she "gets into" stories, she responded, "I believe I do this almost unconsciously. It's just something that happens. When I read I believe it's definitely necessary to picture what you are reading because if you don't, it's just a bunch of words." She also seemed to empathize with characters in the stories, commenting on the effects that the actions of others might have on them.

Another of the engaged readers focused on the literary qualities of the stories and framed many of his responses in more analytical terms. For example, he related each story to other stories that he had read that were similar. He commented that the language that was used for the different sections of Lupescu changed according to who was narrating. He stated, "It sort of adds to the realism that the kid can't pronounce, or doesn't understand what the guy is talking about -- 'ruddermentary.'" He mentioned foreshadowing of what was going to happen and talked about what the author wanted the reader to understand and how the author phrased sentences so that they could be interpreted in different ways.

The nonengaged readers seemed to use similar strategies, but they were unsuccessful in constructing a cohesive whole while using them. One nonengaged reader commented, "I put

questions in the back of my head and later in the story they are answered. That is usually what I try to do; I try to save the questions and try to keep them in the back of my mind until they get to them. Either that or I underline it. I would circle or put a question mark next to the parts that were confusing so I could ask about it in class the next day." In describing why he liked Lupescu better than Alphonse, he commented, "I had a lot of questions in my mind about that story [Lupescu]; I didn't have as much about this one [Alphonse]." His written response about why he "gets into" a story was "because if you don't get into a story, you won't like it as much." This reader obviously knows the same questioning strategy that the engaged readers used while reading; however, he was not able to use this strategy to create an envisionment.

Another of the nonengaged readers used visualization throughout both stories; but this was not sufficient to develop a coherent envisionment of the text. At the beginning of the first session, he stated, "Whenever I read I try to picture it." He later expressed frustration with not being able to visualize, "I'm trying to get a picture of Mr. Lupescu, but I can't. Usually I can match up a face with someone I know or something. I try to match them up so I can get an idea what kind of personality, but they aren't giving you enough so it's kind of tough." Interestingly, the story gave a rather thorough description of Mr. Lupescu just before this reader made the above statement.

Using prior knowledge was a strategy that seemed to have different results for engaged readers and nonengaged readers. The engaged readers in this study tended to use prior knowledge as a way of expanding their envisionment of the stories. For example, one engaged subject explained her reasoning for thinking that the characters in the Alphonse story were young by saying, "I think they're probably younger because they are playing with tanks or something. I'm pretty sure the guys my age don't do that."

Another engaged reader explained why she understood the Alphonse story by stating, "I'm not prejudiced, but I see it all the time so I could see what she said and what she really meant because I hear that kind of thing all the time." She was able to use her own knowledge to better engage with the story and to understand the underlying meaning of the character's words.

On the other hand, some of the nonengaged readers' references to prior knowledge seemed to interfere with their engagement and understanding of the stories. One subject reported while she was reading the description of Mr. Lupescu, "Up here they were talking about a big red nose, and I thought of Santa Claus or something, but I don't know if he is Santa Claus, but then when they talked about the red wings, I thought about a chicken, not a real chicken, you know, but the tv ad about the chicken wings where everybody bends their arms and flaps them like wings, but I don't know why they put that in there."

Another nonengaged subject seemed to become so immersed in his recollections of his own childhood that he interpreted the entire Alphonse story in light of his own experience. "It's my cousin Nicky. He's got this imagination that just runs wild. It reminds me of me as a kid and also my cousin. They are just, you can tell they have vivid imaginations because they want to be tank drivers. We used to play like that." After he had completed the entire story he stated again, "It reminded me of being a kid, playing with my cousins and stuff, and watching them play."

This different use of prior knowledge references by engaged and nonengaged readers paralleled Garrison and Hynds' (1991) conclusions that proficient readers in their study used

personal evocations to help them understand the text, and less proficient readers used prior experiences to draw them away from the text.

Similar comprehension strategies, therefore, seem to be used by both engaged and nonengaged readers. It is possible that with a larger number of subjects, some differences might become evident; however, with these twenty-five subjects, it was impossible to develop a strategy use profile distinguishing these two groups. Examining how these readers use these strategies may be more productive in terms of discovering ways to help nonengaged readers become more engaged with their reading and to help readers develop more coherent text representations.

Related factors

Almost all of the subjects whether they were engaged with their reading or not reported that they liked fiction. They almost all reported that their parents like fiction as well. These may have been what the subjects perceived as the "acceptable" response. In the surveys when students were asked about their favorite authors, favorite books and why they liked them, responses were more varied.

One of the engaged readers responded that she had just finished Wuthering Heights and had really enjoyed it "because I really got involved with the character of Heathcliff. He made me think. He was created in such a way that he was a victim of circumstance. Characters which are hard to figure out are my favorite types."

At the other end of the spectrum, one of the nonengaged readers reported that she had just finished and liked Just a Summer Romance. Her reason for liking it was, "I just got into it."

One of the subjects who was engaged with the Alphonse story and not the Lupescu story responded that Wolf's Hour was the best book he had ever read because "it keeps you in suspense, great detail, action packed, also it was long and quick reading."

About half of the subjects mentioned that books they liked involved real issues, topics that they could relate to, and characters who seemed real. Among reasons for liking certain authors, about half the subjects who responded indicated they liked the author because he/she was descriptive and suspenseful. Most of the subjects, however, did not have a favorite author. There seemed to be no correlation between subjects' having favorite books and/or authors and engagement.

The one difference which seemed obvious between the engaged readers and the nonengaged readers was in whether or not they discussed books with their parents and their peers. Subjects who were engaged with both stories were more likely to discuss books than subjects who were nonengaged with both stories. A possible explanation for this is that if parents and/or peers discuss books, there is a tendency to value reading and to seek to become more involved with it. Another possible explanation would be that if subjects are more engaged with their reading, they are more likely to bring it up as a topic of conversation than those who are nonengaged. It would be interesting to explore this issue further with parents and peers as well as with the subjects.

Educational Implications

In order for *all* students to become effective readers, they must practice. When students enjoy and become engaged with stories, they are more likely to spend their time reading. The

intention of this study was to identify the comprehension strategies that help readers become more engaged with fiction. What we found was that many engaged and nonengaged readers tend to use similar strategies with varying results. Strategy use also appears to be idiosyncratic in that individual readers tend to rely on particular strategies.

It seems reasonable to suggest that teachers need to provide strategy instruction for all students with the suggestion that students need to experiment and discover which strategies work best for them. It was quite apparent from the subjects in this study that they made personal choices about how to understand and respond to the stories.

Some of the subjects in this study were attempting to use strategies but were unsuccessful in constructing meaning. For these readers, practice in using strategies appropriately would be valuable. They need to have the strategies modelled for them, and then they need ample opportunity to refine their use.

It was also apparent from this study that difficulty of text hampered students' engagement with the story. In order to encourage engagement with literature, students need to be allowed and encouraged to read some selections that are easy enough that they do not have to expend energy on the lower level tasks of decoding and understanding individual sentences. This will free them to construct envisionments which will lead to greater engagement.

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Table 1 Strategy Classification Scheme

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Rereading	Reader goes back and rereads part of the selection.	"I read the sentence over again so I could understand it. Sometimes I go down through the paragraph and I have no idea what I just read, so I'll read the whole thing over again."
Reading subsequent text	Reader indicates confusion that he/she thinks may be cleared up by reading further in the text.	"They have this phrase that I don't understand, 'After you, my dear Alphonse, I guess later in the story I'll find out what that means."
Questioning	Reader asks questions that he/she wants to answer.	"Who's Bobby? Is that Robert and Marjorie's son? Are they married? Where does this guy Alan come from?"
Predicting	Reader predicts what is going to happen.	"The police will probably be waiting there to see if anyone shows up just in case. I don't think he'll go back because if he doesn't go back, the kid will think it was his imagination."
Using prior knowledge	Reader uses what he/she already knows to construct meaning.	"When kids do something wrong, the other parent always calls the other parent, the parent of the son or daughter even though it is their son or daughter too."
Visualizing	Reader "sees" what is happening.	"I'm picturing the setting, with the fireplace and the people sitting there talking."
Making inferences	Reader understands what isn't stated directly.	"It looks like the story is taking place either during or shortly after World War II since the bad guys in the games are centered on the Japanese instead of cowboys and Indians or something like that."
Relating to theme	Reader focuses on the theme or point of the story.	"The story is that people stereotype because of race."
Using literary conventions	Reader uses literary conventions (such as foreshadowing, character development, etc.) to guide meaning.	"It kind of sounds like Bobby is narrating here because they are using his sort of language. There is a little foreshadowing of Gorgo."

Table 2 Self-report and Teacher Assessment of Reading Engagement

REPORTING MODE	ENGAGED[a]	MIXED[b]	NONENGAGED[c]
ORAL			
Usually Engaged	7	4	2
Sometimes Engaged	0	5	4
Never Engaged	0	2	1
WRITTEN			
Usually Engaged	6	7	4
Sometimes Engaged	1	3	2
Never Engaged	0	1	1
TEACHER			
Usually Engaged	4	2	2
Sometimes Engaged	2	3	3
Never Engaged	1	2	2

[a] N = 7 (Engaged with both short stories)
[b] N = 11 (Engaged with one of the short stories and not the other)
[c] N = 7 (Nonengaged with both short stories)

Table 3 Strategy Use by Story and Engagement

	LUPESCU		ALPHONSE	
STRATEGY	ENGAGED[a]	NONENGAGED[b]	ENGAGED[c]	NONENGAGED[d]
TOTAL STRATEGY USE	24.00 (11.88)	22.60 (10.88)	23.07 (16.87)	15.50 (8.36)
Rereading	2.70 (2.00)	1.80 (1.74)	0.47 (0.83)	1.00 (1.05)
Reading Subsequent Text	0.80 (0.79)	0.87 (1.06)	0.53 (0.52)	0.80 (0.42)
Questioning	4.50 (5.95)	2.27 (2.43)	1.33 (3.58)	0.90 (1.45)
Predicting	1.80 (3.01)	1.40 (1.55)	0.67 (1.11)	0.20 (0.42)
Using Prior Knowledge	0.50 (1.08)	1.87 (2.53)	2.20 (3.26)	1.90 (2.81)
Visualizing	1.70 (3.02)	1.60 (2.99)	1.47 (2.26)	0.30 (0.95)
Making Inferences	11.00 (4.24)	10.33 (6.62)	14.27 (9.18)	8.30 (4.52)
Relating to Story Theme	0.10 (.32)	0.40 (1.30)	1.53 (1.99)	0.50 (0.70)
Using Literary Conventions	0.90 (0.99)	1.80 (2.18)	0.67 (1.35)	1.70 (1.83)

[a] N = 10
[b] N = 15
[c] N = 15
[d] N = 10

Table 4 Comprehension by Story and Engagement

COMPREHENSION	LUPESCU		ALPHONSE	
	ENGAGED[a]	NONENGAGED[b]	ENGAGED[c]	NONENGAGED[d]
Good	4	0	9	3
Fair	6	4	5	5
Poor	0	11	1	3

[a] N = 10
[b] N = 15
[c] N = 15
[d] N = 10

Table 5 Number of Responses to Related Factors by Group

	ENGAGED[a]			MIXED[b]			NONENGAGED[c]		
	Yes	Some	No	Yes	Some	No	Yes	Some	No
Like fiction	7	0	0	10	0	1	6	0	1
Parents like fiction	4	0	1	10	0	1	6	0	0
Peers like fiction	5	1	0	8	0	2	4	0	2
Discuss books with parents	5	0	2	5	1	5	1	3	3
Discuss books with peers	4	2	1	5	4	2	0	5	2

[a] N = 7 (Engaged with both short stories)
[b] N = 11 (Engaged with one of the two short stories)
[c] N = 7 (Nonengaged with both short stories)
Numbers represented do not always total to the number in the group because in some cases subjects responded that they did not know.

READING SURVEY

1. Do you like to read fiction?
2. How many fiction books have you read in the last year?
3. What kinds of fiction do you like to read?
4. Who is your favorite author?
5. Why do you like him/her?
6. What book have you read lately that you liked?
7. Why did you like it?
8. When you read, do you usually "get into" the story?
9. If yes, why do you think you do? If no, why do you think that you don't?
10. Do your parents like to read fiction?
11. Do your friends like to read fiction?
12. Do you ever discuss books with your parents?
13. Do you ever discuss books with your friends?
14. When you read non-fiction, such as an essay or a textbook assignment, do you read it the same way that you read fiction?
15. If you think that you read fiction and non-fiction differently, please explain these differences.

Figure 1 Reading Survey Questions

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